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TOWN TALK

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Talk of the Town

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THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY

There is in this country a three-year-old right-wing organization called the John Birch Society. It was founded in Belmont, Mass., and has spread rapidly across the land. There is a chapter here in Alexandria.

The society and its branches have functioned without publicity. Its key members generally are not the best-known people in a community, albeit all have been affiliated in the past with one sort of conservative movement or another.

The chapters hold meetings to discuss the fight on communism and kindred other issues, often have guest speakers who are right-wingers with fairly well-publicized names, and sponsor such things as the showing of anti-communist films.

The Alexandria chapter, for example, staged a public showing last week of the controversial strip "Operation Abolition."

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'TIME' DROPS THE AXE

Now comes a windfall of publicity for the John Birch Society, and its leaders can be expected to wail in great volume.

Time Magazine has done a story on the society in which the John Birchers are accused of promoting fascist front organizations. The story doesn't say so in that many words; it does say that the society promotes "communist-style front organizations that do not use the John Birch name."

"Carefully avoiding normal channels of political action," Time says, "the society accepts the dictatorial direction of one man who sees democracy as a 'perennial fraud' and estimates that the U.S. is 40% to 60% communist-controlled."

This "one man" is Robert Welch, a 61-year-old retired businessman from Belmont, Mass., who organized the John Birch Society in 1958 and named it for a U.S. Navy captain who was killed by Chinese communist guerrillas.

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EVERYBODY A PINK?

The bible of the John Birch Society is a Welch-produced book entitled "The Politician." Time calls it Welch's Mein Kampf.

The book contains such morsels as this:

"Milton Eisenhower is actually Dwight Eisenhower's superior and boss within the communist party . . . For (the former president), there is only one possible word to describe his purposes and actions. That word is treason."

"The Politician" refers to Director Allen Dulles of the Central Intelligence Agency as "the most protected and untouchable supporter of communism, next to Eisenhower himself, in Washington."

Mr. Welch also called the late John Foster Dulles "a communist agent."

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SECRECY DESTROYED

Time Magazine is very unkind to the John Birch Society, and there is certain to arise a crescendo of cries that the magazine is being "characteristically left-wing" in its dissertation.

A good many non-members, particularly here in the South, will say "amen." But in summary the Time expose will harm the society because it has taken the secrecy weapon away from it.

The magazine piece, for example, exposes the John Birchers as the force behind chain letters for such crusades as the impeachment of Chief Justice Warren and the preservation of the Connally Amendment to the U.S. contract vis-a-vis the World Court.

Both of these are popular movements in the South and among staunch conservatives elsewhere. But revealing the fact that letters abetting them were promoted by a relatively small organization will certainly render such letter-writing campaigns less effective.

We await the reaction of the John Birchers in this area to the Time Magazine hatchet job.